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THE SOVIET UNION, IRAN AND
PAKISTAN IN THE 1990's: SECURITY IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE UNITED STATES,

by

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ABSTRACT

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a Muslim, nonaligned Third World buffer state located on the Soviet border but outside the core zone of Soviet security, may mark a watershed in Soviet policy toward Iran or Pakistan.

The western dependence on Persian Gulf oil, the severe internal challenges which will face Iran and Pakistan in the 1990's, and the possibility of rising Soviet challenges and threats will require an unprecedented US/allied response.

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FOREWORD

This Futures Group paper raises numerous questions about Soviet policy toward Iran and Pakistan in the 1990's. In discussing changes in Soviet policy toward Iran and Pakistan and upheavals in those two countries, it focuses on security implications for the United States in general and the US Army in particular. The author discusses Iran and Pakistan in terms of the strategic significance of the Gulf area, particularly as these relate to oil, oil routes, internal and regional stability, and diverse Soviet threats.

This paper was prepared as a contribution to the field of national security research and study. As such, it does not reflect the official view of the US Army War College, the Department of the Army, or the Department of Defense.



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INTRODUCTION

There are two major interpretations of the ultimate direction of Soviet security policy toward Iran and Pakistan in the context of the Persian Gulf area in the coming decades. The first holds that the Soviet Union essentially pursues a defensive policy, aimed at preventing Iran from being used as a base against the Soviet heartland, and to ensure that Pakistan discourages and prevents external powers from using that country as an anti-Soviet base. This interpretation has been weakened since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a Muslim, non-aligned buffer state located on the Soviet border but outside of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact (the core zone of Soviet security in the world). It has been argued that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan may mark a watershed in Soviet policies toward selected Third World countries contiguous to the USSR and that the potential for similar Soviet activities in other Third World countries bordering the Soviet Union is rather high in the 1980's and 1990's.

The second interpretation presents Soviet objectives in an offensive context aimed, minimally, at weakening Western influence commensurate with increasing that of the Soviet Union by neutralizing selected Third World countries located directly adjacent to the Soviet Union. Maximally, the

Soviets would achieve the historic Tsarist desire for a warm-water port on the Persian Gulf by dominating Iran and Pakistan to gain control over some or all the oilfields of the Persian Gulf area in order to ensure the rapid decline of the West.

It is highly unlikely that the Soviet Union could attain the maximum desired objective posited by the offensive interpretation of Soviet policy without going to war with the United States. Therefore, it is assumed that the Soviet Union will continue to pursue the rhetoric of a defensive policy toward Iran and Pakistan, while taking advantage of every conceivable opportunity to weaken their links with the West; to expand Soviet ties with them; and to seek to expand Soviet influence directly, indirectly, or covertly whenever an opportunity arises. In order to accomplish its objectives, the Soviet Union appears to be shifting its tactics of a "good neighborly" defensive posture to a "good neighborly" offensive posture, with a growing potential for the direct use of Soviet forces, the use of Soviet proxies, covert activities, a growing reemphasis on indigenous Communist parties of all varieties, and support for separatists.

This paper focuses on the Soviet Union, Iran and Pakistan in the context of the Persian Gulf area. US security interests in Iran and Pakistan are discussed in terms of the strategic significance of the Gulf area to the West--focusing on oil, lines of communication, internal and regional stability and diverse Soviet threats. In addition, attention is paid to some of the implications of Soviet threats in this area for the United States in the 1990's.

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

Oil. In 1979, the United States imported 46 percent of its total oil consumption, 28 percent of it from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran. Saudi Arabia was and probably will be the largest single source of US oil imports.¹ Ironically, despite the rhetoric in the United States to reduce its dependence on imported oil, this dependence has increased since 1973, and this trend is generally expected to continue into the 1990's. Western Europe and Japan, respectively, imported 81 percent and 77 percent of their oil requirements from the Middle East and North Africa. The demands of Western Europe and Japan are also expected to increase into the 1990's. The situation will be exacerbated when the Soviet bloc becomes a significant net importer of oil. The impact of an indefinite oil shortage on the Soviet Union could have the following consequences:

Economic growth may slow considerably. Oil production will drop, leaving less to export to their Eastern European satellites, putting more strains on those countries' economies and therefore on political relationships with Moscow. . . .²

US oil production could also drop considerably in the coming decades. Thornton F. Bradshaw, the President of the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO), in June 1980 warned that US oil production was dropping at a faster rate than predicted. According to Bradshaw, "the tired old oilfields of the United States will produce about 2.5 million barrels less [daily] by the end of the 1980's than they do now."³ The present production is 10 million barrels per day. Add to this the needs of those Third World nations which heretofore had little requirement for petroleum, and the resulting global shortfalls in oil production vs. demand become quickly apparent, unless Mexico, the North

Sea oil and Nigeria and other sources of energy such as coal, nuclear and solar can pick up the slack. At any rate, the problems of oil loom large. Western alliances, bilateral and multilateral, and the application of collective defense embodied in these alliances could be jeopardized by severe strains which could result from any prolonged interruption of Western access to Mideast oil.

The "petroleum age" will likely continue into the 1990's. No other imported strategic resource has had the impact of oil on Western life-styles and attitudes. As long as world oil production fails to meet the world's rising consumption of oil, the Persian Gulf area, where the largest known oil reserves of the world are located, will inevitably assume a greater strategic and economic importance to the West. Likewise, as the Soviet Union begins to feel the effect of oil shortages, the Persian Gulf area will become even more important to them. The LOC's of the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, the South Atlantic and the South Pacific are critical to the United States and its allies as their primary oil routes.

Lines of Communication. The importance of the Persian Gulf LOC, which goes through the Strait of Hormuz, is demonstrated by its great use. In September 1979 over 57% of all petroleum shipped by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) passed through the Strait of Hormuz. The prediction that the US will depend on imported oil into the 21st century contains the implied prediction that the Persian Gulf LOC will be vital to the US for the same period.

Likewise the air routes of the Persian Gulf area will continue to have political, commercial, and military significance. This region's airspace will remain an important link among North America, Europe, and the nations

of Asia and parts of the Pacific. Granting or withholding overflight rights is an inherent right exercised by all nations, with substantial military implications.

The land routes of Turkey, Iran and Pakistan will become increasingly important in the 1990's as a means to distribute an increasing amount of manufactured goods from North America and Europe to the Middle East and South Asia by a combination of road networks linked with ports. However, the primary importance of land routes would be gained for the Soviet Union through a warm water port with direct Soviet land links to the Indian Ocean.

INTERNAL & REGIONAL DIMENSIONS

Internal Dynamics. Great uncertainties lie ahead in both Iran and Pakistan in the coming decades. Both nations are on the verge of massive changes, as indicated by the great revolutionary changes in Iran and the political uncertainties in Pakistan. The application of Islamic tenets to political and economic life in Iran and Pakistan will be watched carefully by Muslims and non-Muslims. Both Islamabad and Teheran will continue to introduce and implement additional Islamic principles based on Sharia (Islamic) laws in civil, criminal, political and economic aspects of society. Hopefully, the proper application of the true humanitarian and social ideals of Islam, rather than politics, will shape the fundamental mosaic of future changes in both Iran and Pakistan. Both superpowers must be prepared to accept the fact that internal upheavals will probably be the most important source of drastic changes in much of the Islamic Third World in the coming decade. The superpowers must learn to live with such changes, whether they like them or not.

As illustrated by the upheaval in Iran, many Third World leaders lack political legitimacy, defined as popular support among their people and

national institutions. As a result, they will face serious internal threats which often originate from a fragmented, heterogeneous population bound together by the common goal of deposing an incumbent leader. Whether such leaders can survive prolonged periods of internal political instability in the future remains to be seen.

External Links. Pakistan remains on the forefront of the nonaligned, Pan-Islamic nations of the Third World. Iran, which during the Shah's regime remained in the Western orbit, has pursued a nonaligned foreign policy posture. Since the bloody April 1978 revolution, Afghanistan has also made a fundamental shift--away from its traditional nonalignment policy and toward the Soviet Union.

Pakistan, a traditional friend of the United States, will remain throughout the 20th century one of the leading states of the Third World. Pakistan questions US credibility, but continues to contribute to stability in the Persian Gulf area. The United States will continue to enunciate its support for the independence and territorial integrity of Pakistan as outlined by a 1959 executive agreement between the two countries.

Iran renounced its 1959 executive defense agreement with the United States in 1979 and has also renounced the 1921 Soviet-Iranian Treaty, although the Soviet Union has not recognized that renunciation. This Soviet view will persist and may well be used as a basis for future Soviet intervention. Despite the turmoil in Iran today, it can be expected that Iran will establish a normal role for itself in the community of nations, a role that would involve

commerce, trade, and the flow of goods and resources after the Iraq-Iranian War and the internal upheavals are settled down, the division of authority in Iran is solved, and the US hostages are released. The US hostages became the focus of media attention around the world to such an extent that they distracted US public opinion away from the aspirations and ideals of the Iranian revolution and suffering of the Iranian masses. The release of the US hostages and a solution to the Iraqi-Iranian disputes will be major preliminary steps in normalization of the role of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the community of nations.

Nuclear Proliferation. Many Third World nations will acquire sophisticated conventional weapons and a few will also join the nuclear club--Iraq and Pakistan are potential candidates.

India, the most powerful riparian nation in the Indian Ocean, has already detonated a nuclear device and, according to reliable sources, Pakistan "has been acquiring abroad the components of a uranium enrichment facility. . ."⁴ This matter is viewed "with the utmost seriousness"⁵ in Washington because nuclear proliferation in South Asia is considered to have "very serious consequences for global security and for US efforts to contain this awesome destructive power."⁶ The acquisition of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan could fuel the momentum for other Third World nations to acquire nuclear weapons.

The proliferation of nuclear weapons is a certainty by the 1990's. Therefore, the relevant long-range questions pertaining to the acquisition of nuclear weapons by some Third World states are those that pertain to the US-USSR's ability to influence such states to slow down the proliferation of

such weapons and to use utmost caution with them or face severe economic, political and military consequences.

Separatist Movements. The forces of nationalism, Islam, and various brands of socialism will remain the principal ideologies in most Third World nations in the coming decades. In Iran and Pakistan, nationalism and Islam will generally transcend regional and ethnic differences. But in specific contexts separatist movements such as among the ethnic Arabs in southwestern Iran, the Kurds in Iran, Iraq and Turkey and the Baluchs will continue to pose serious threats to internal and regional stability. One of the principal tests of the durability of the governments of Iran and Pakistan will come in the future over the way in which they will deal with their diverse, individualistic minorities' socioeconomic and political demands.

Baluchi separatism in tribal areas in southeastern Iran, Afghanistan and western parts of Pakistan will remain a principal regional issue for these countries' security, for the economic fulfillment of the poverty-stricken people of Baluchistan, and for regional stability. External powers, particularly the Soviet Union, its proxies or allies, may decide to covertly or overtly assist the Baluchs to fuel regional instability in the hope of gaining a potential foothold on the Indian Ocean through an independent, pro-Soviet Baluchistan. Baluchistan, located on the Arabian Sea with deep water ports of Qwadar and Cha Bahar, remains the most vulnerable regional area of Iran and Pakistan and presents the least expensive and risky opportunity for Moscow, which wishes to gain direct land access to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean.

SOVIET THREATS

The greater the Soviet perception of freedom of action in the military realm, the greater the danger that they might attempt to exert the leverage of military power (threatened or used) in extending their economic, diplomatic, or ideological influence.⁷

General David C. Jones, USAF

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan has had global consequences. The invasion deflected US-USSR relations away from detente, and also strained relations.

The invasion of Afghanistan has also created an awareness in the United States government of vital current and future US interests in the Persian Gulf area, with a US enunciation to defend these interests through the use of force, if necessary. The Soviet invasion also markedly contributed to the destabilization of the Persian Gulf area to the detriment of US national security interests, and it will continue to enhance potentials for conflicts in the Indian subcontinent and the Persian Gulf. The conditions in the Persian Gulf area in the 1990's will depend on some questions to be answered in the 1980's. Will the Soviet Union withdraw from Afghanistan in the early 1980's? What will be the form of the Afghan government after such a Soviet withdrawal? Will Afghanistan become a Soviet satellite, an independent Communist state linked with Moscow, or a neutral Islamic state? The ultimate status of Afghanistan will have a critical impact on events in the Persian Gulf area, on US/Soviet relations with Iran and Pakistan, and on US-Soviet rivalry or cooperation in this area.

Moscow's dilemma over Afghanistan appears to be an aspect of the new Brezhnev Doctrine which, in essence, implies that once a nation enters the Communist orbit, it cannot withdraw from it.⁸ Yet, Moscow realizes that force may fail to bring the Afghan (Mujahedeen) guerrillas into a Communist coalition government in Afghanistan. Is it wishful thinking to assume that Moscow eventually will get tired of this dilemma and seek a peaceful way out of Afghanistan? Is it an exaggeration that the Persian Gulf is a prey to be devoured by the Soviet Union in the coming decades? Or will the countries of

the area pursue their own interests or a neutral policy? It appears unlikely that the Soviet Union would invade, occupy, and maintain control over a country with over 36 million people (Iran) or the far less populous but critical Saudi Arabia, short of considering the possibility of going to war against the United States; however, certain parts of the Persian Gulf area, such as Baluchistan, bordering on the Arabian Sea and located within Iran and between Pakistan and Afghanistan, could fall into Soviet hands if the West fails to come to Iran or Pakistan's assistance before or in time in such a crisis situation.

In the coming decades Soviet covert activities and the reliance on emigres and on local Iranian and Pakistani Communists could expand substantially. The exacerbation of internal upheavals in Iran or Pakistan will provide ample opportunity for exploitation by the Soviet Union.

Minimally, Moscow hopes to gain greater recognition from Western Europe and Japan of Soviet aspirations and its future position in the Persian Gulf, in order to weaken Western solidarity and to gain a permanent, recognized foothold in matters pertaining to security of the Persian Gulf oil, oil routes, and similar related security issues. The presence of the Soviets and Soviet proxies (Cubans and East Germans) in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, the growing formidable Soviet fleet in the Indian Ocean, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan probably foreshadow massive changes in future Soviet policy toward the Gulf area. As one authority points out:

Traditionally, since imperial times, the Russians have spoken of their need and desire for an outlet to the Indian Ocean. The thrust into Afghanistan brings them nearer to that goal than ever before.⁹

POTENTIAL SECURITY IMPLICATIONS
FOR THE UNITED STATES

General:

o The Soviet Union has and will continue to have the clear advantage of being "far better positioned"¹⁰ than the United States in the Gulf area, a factor which will retain this area as the principal danger to the United States in the 1990's. The Soviet Union could, within a few weeks, send more than 100,000 troops into Iran, Pakistan, and toward the Gulf oilfields. But such a Soviet invasion appears unlikely to occur or succeed because it could encounter fierce local resistance on several fronts, a probable US/allied military response, and the consequent fear of escalation to tactical nuclear war, as well as raise the spectre of World War III, particularly if the Soviets attempt to actually prevent Western access to Persian Gulf oil. If, in fact, these considerations deter the Soviet Union from invading Iran or Pakistan, the Soviet Union may still increase its influence and leverage in this area militarily through arms sales, diplomatic efforts, covert activities, the use of proxies or subversion of dissidents.

o The potential expanded use of Cubans and East Germans as Soviet proxies on the Arabian Peninsula should be alarming to US strategists and should be deterred by the United States, its European and Pacific allies, and friends in the Third World. While there is a general agreement on the need to cope with such proxy forces, there appears to be little consensus on how to deter or stop them in the Third World: by unilateral US means, supported by Third World host nations; by friendly Third World nations such as Egypt and Pakistan; by a US-allied effort; through strengthening US friends in the Third World to face such a threat on their own; or combinations of the above in various forms, as allowed and necessitated by circumstances.

o Many Persian Gulf leaders recognize that they need US support as long as the Soviet Union represents a potential threat to them. An effective, credible US commitment to help Pakistan and the friendly, pro-Western Gulf states should be developed to ensure the region's balance of power which probably will be essential to the maintenance of world peace. The United States must increase its credibility in the Gulf area by, at least, strengthening its presence in the northwestern Indian Ocean to provide a "prudent deterrent against any efforts to interfere with the independence of the states of the region or restrict the free access of others in this vital region;"¹¹ and by strengthening the friendly states of the area militarily through various forms of security assistance and joint military cooperative ventures.

o The United States could face several severe crises in the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, Asia, the Caribbean, and Western Europe, simultaneously,¹² in the coming decades. The question is whether the United States and its allies and friends will have the capability and willingness to face several threats at the same time. Will they place sufficient emphasis in developing their capability to face such threats? Will the US 1½ war strategy remain valid for the era of one and two or three half wars? Will US allies develop sufficient flexibility and capability to assist the United States in Third World crises and accept a greater share of the responsibility to defend themselves? Will the US Navy develop its forces to protect and defend US interests in three oceans with a three-ocean navy, rather than with a 1½ ocean navy? Will the US Army have sufficient funds and manpower to contribute to a wider level of US global responsibility beyond existing US commitments?

o US/allied dependence on Persian Gulf oil will probably expand in the 1990's as will their interests in defense against potential Soviet actions to deny the West access to this vital resource. The United States will prepare a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) for engagement in the Persian

Gulf and other Third World areas, as deemed vital and necessary by the National Command Authority (NCA), and the US Army along with other services will have a role in this force. Somalia, Kenya and Oman are potential staging areas for such a US Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force. The United States has reached agreements with Kenya, Oman and Somalia. But the extent of the use of the Somali port of Berbera and other Somali facilities at Mogadishu will ultimately depend on an enduring resolution of Somali-Ethiopian territorial disputes over the Ogaden region and the future status of superpower rivalry in the Horn of Africa.

France, the United Kingdom and other US allies are also expected to increase their roles for self defense and for contingencies in and around the Persian Gulf area. The development of a multi-service, coalition-style, Western force to deter a potential Soviet onslaught in the Persian Gulf area must remain high in the 1980's to deter the Soviet Union from the use of its own forces to take over the oilfields of the Persian Gulf. If deterrence fails, there is a high likelihood for a direct US-USSR confrontation. Barring unforeseen circumstances, the same trends are likely to be expected in the 1990's as well.

US Army Implications.

- o The US Army, along with other services, will have a major role in the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) designed primarily for engagement in Persian Gulf contingencies. The RDJTF will probably need to expand to meet the needs of such a heavy mission and so will the role of the US Army in it.

- o The US Army's role in Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and International Military Education and Training (IMET), involving the friendly states of the Persian Gulf area, will also need to expand, in order to enable these states to contribute to their own defense and to the maintenance of the precarious balance of power in the area.

o In case of future outbreaks of hostilities between, e.g., Iran and Iraq, the US Army, along with other services, may perform various missions to ensure the safety and security of oil pipelines, installations, refineries and off-shore loading facilities.

o The missions and responsibilities of the US Army in the Persian Gulf area will be far greater than they have been since the end of the Second World War. Therefore, it is prudent to begin to prepare the Army for massive undertakings in the 1990's.

ENDNOTES

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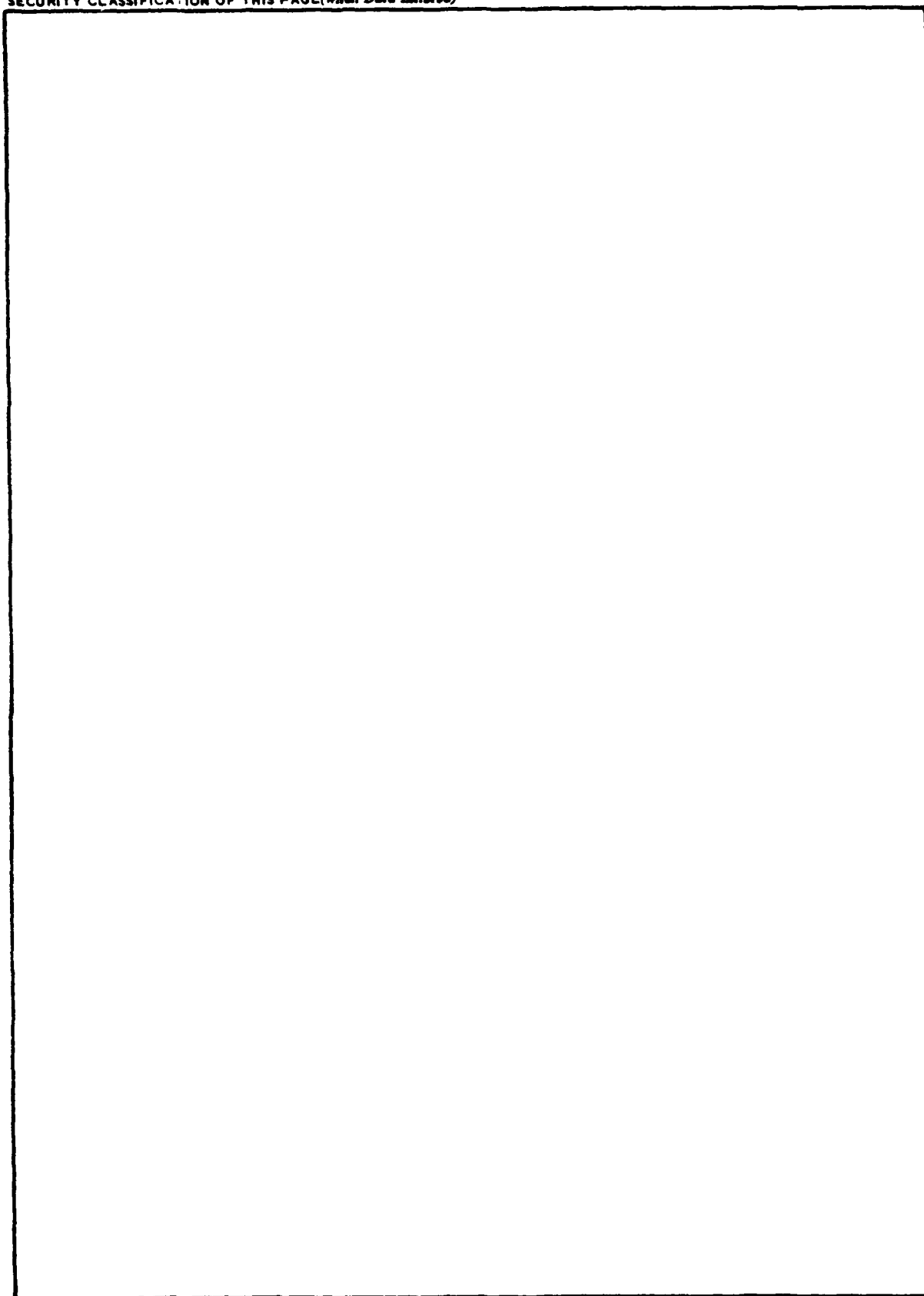
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